



The Old Ironsides Report

4 July 2003

EOD makes an 'impact' on Iraq

Story, photos by Spc. Christopher Stanis, 1AD PAO

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Under the reign of Saddam Hussein, Baghdad's streets were littered with weapons and filled with ammunition caches.

Now, the 18th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), out of Fort Bragg, N.C., is doing its part in restoring humanity to Iraq's capital.

EOD has uncovered more than 100 caches since arriving in April, said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Elliot, a team chief with 18th Ordnance Co.

"We've found them in schools, playgrounds, parks ... the only place we haven't found one is in a mosque," he said. "We don't want these things used against U.S. forces or the Iraqi people, so we're trying to get as much UXO (unexploded ordnance) as possible."

Originally, the unit was split in to heavy and light teams, however, due to changing missions, it has become all light teams, Elliot said.

A light team consists of two EOD soldiers and a three-man engineer reconnaissance team (ERT) from 1st Armored Division to pull security.

"(The ERT is) there to keep us safe," Elliot said.

If weapons or UXO can be salvaged, or moved to a clear site for demolition, EOD moves them. If the device must be blown in place, they take the proper safety precautions and dispose of it.

"We've (blown UXO) as close as 10 meters to a school," Elliot said. "We put sand bags and tires around the device. We did no damage to the school, or windows, or anything."

The reason for salvaging as much munitions as possible is for rebuilding the Iraqi police force. And simply that they have no where to dispose of it, said Staff Sgt. Bryan Harrington, 18th EOD.

Elliot said they receive up to 20 new incidents daily – mainly from soldiers on patrol – and can clear anywhere from five to 15 depending on what they are and how far away they are.

Though they do find a lot of UXO, often times a report will leave the ordnance team empty-handed.

"We'll get (to a site) and a local will have already gotten it," Harrington said. "We don't know what he wants with it, but it's gone."



Staff Sgt. Matthew Chapman, 18th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), places C-4 on a rocket propelled grenade to be disposed of with a precise, controlled detonation.

One thing EOD has been lucky enough not to find is booby-trapped caches.

"I don't think (Iraqi soldiers) had time to (set traps)," Harrington said. "They didn't anticipate the war moving this fast. I think they stayed until they knew the officers and senior officials were gone, and then they left."

However, spending a lot of time in unsecured areas of the city, Elliot said the team takes fire at least every other day.

He recalled one incident in particular when his team received sniper fire.

"May 9 we were checking out some bunkers," Elliot said. "I took a round through my sleeve that nicked my arm."

He didn't even realize he was shot until his major pointed it out.

"At the time, I had so much adrenaline running I didn't know anything," he continued.

Elliot said that a deployment like this is where they really get the chance to apply their skills.

"We do our job once every four weeks (in Garrison)," Elliot said, "but here in Iraq we do our job every day."

NEWS

U.S. Planning for Intervention in Liberia

WASHINGTON (AP) - The U.S. military commander in Europe has been ordered to begin planning for possible American intervention in Liberia.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said members of President Bush's National Security Council will take up the subject again Thursday, considering the "severe humanitarian crisis emerging" in the West African nation, the safety of American diplomats there and other issues.

Report: N. Korea agrees to hold MIA talks

North Korea has accepted a US proposal for new talks on recovering remains of American servicemen missing from the Korean War.

North Korea's military agreed to the talks "out of humanitarian concern," the North's official news agency KCNA said.

More than 8,000 American military personnel are missing from the 1950-53 war. Since 1996, American teams have recovered more than 150 sets of remains believed to be those of American soldiers. Ten were identified and returned to their families for burial.

Jobless Rate Hits 9-Year High of 6.4 Pct.

WASHINGTON (AP) - The nation's unemployment rate shot up to 6.4 percent in June, the highest level in more than nine years, in an economic slump that has added nearly a million people to jobless rolls in the past three months.

Businesses slashed 30,000 jobs in June for the fifth straight month, with cuts heavily concentrated in the nation's factories, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

Chaplain's thought for the day:

"Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. That ripple builds others. Those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and injustice."

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy

Capetown, South Africa, 6 Jun 66

"Blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He is like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream."

-- Jeremiah 17:7

SPORTS

Armstrong says winning Tour is tougher

PARIS (AP) -- A quietly optimistic Lance Armstrong said Thursday that a consecutive fifth Tour victory was far from certain, warning that in a race as unpredictable as the Tour de France, anybody can win.

The 31-year-old Texan, who would join just one other rider to win five consecutive Tours, said he expected this year's centennial race to be a closer-run competition than previous years, when he left competitors in his wake.

"I think the race will be more challenging for us. I think it will be a tighter race. I'm not getting any younger, and therefore probably not getting any stronger," Armstrong said. "Other guys are reaching the pinnacle of their career. I think there are some wild cards that can really change the face of the race."

Armstrong, a cancer survivor who has become a sporting icon around the world, acknowledged that the burden of fame and fortune weigh heavier now than they did when he first won the Tour in 1999.

But speaking to reporters just two days ahead of the start of the race Saturday, Armstrong made clear that he is entirely focused on the job ahead.

"I can't think of a better way to spend the month of July," he said. "The race has everything. I think it has difficulty, it has joy, it has excitement, and it even has death."

While Armstrong stopped short of saying that a fifth consecutive victory was all but certain, other riders said he clearly remained the man to beat.

"When everybody talks about victory and what's going to happen, and what you are going to do, it gives me a mad feeling," he said. "Nothing is given in this sport, and anybody can win."

Working on the principal that if it ain't broke, don't fix it, Armstrong is sticking with tried and tested winning teammates for this centenary Tour.

His U.S. Postal Service team unveiled a nine-man squad this week that -- with just one exception -- is the same as the one that helped Armstrong capture his fourth consecutive Tour last year.

The Tour, a grueling 23-day, 3,427.5-kilometer (2,125-mile) clockwise slog around France, is the ultimate test of individual endurance, but few can become champions without a good team.

The three-week race begins Saturday at the foot of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

If he wins, Armstrong will join Spanish legend Miguel Indurain as only the second rider to capture five consecutive Tours. Indurain won in 1991-95. Three other racers have won five Tours, but none of them consecutively.

TODAY'S WEATHER

High: 109F/43C

Low: 81F/27C

